major illicit drug producing and/or drug transit countries. It has listed 20 countries including India in this category.

(c) The Government has taken a number of steps to curb illegal production of opium poppy in the country. These include:-

(i) Carrying out of satellite/ground survey to detect illicit cultivation of opium poppy;

(ii) Destruction of illicit opium poppy and prosecution of the offenders.

(iii) Coordination between various drug law enforcement agencies to enhance the impact of drug law enforcement.

(iv) Training law enforcement officials to upgrade their skills to combat drug trafficking.

(v) A scheme of monetary rewards to informers and officers for information leading to seizures of narcotics drugs.

(vi) Financial assistance being provided to eligible States for strengthening their anti-narcotic units.

Acquisition and transfer of immovable property outside the country

3372. SHRI A. ELAVARASAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Government has asked the State Governments to be extra vigilant in matters of acquisition and transfer of immovable property in the country by a resident outside India and checking the eligibility under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) before registering a sale or purchase;

(b) if so, the response of State Governments thereto and the details thereof;

(c) whether Government will constitute a separate board to monitor such acquisition and transfer of immovable property by foreign nationals or resident outside India;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Government of India has also issued a Press Release dated the 6th November, 2008 in this regard and the State Governments are taking appropriate action.

(c) to (e) There is no such proposal under the consideration of the Government of India.

Financing of States' plans

3373. SHRI P. RAJEEVE: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state the quantum of funds given to the State Governments for financing the States' plans in the years 2007-08 and 2008-09?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): Funds to the tune of Rs. 48809.91 crore in the financial year 2007-08 and Rs. 60990.92 crore in the financial year 2008-09 have been released to the State Governments for financing the States' Plans in the years 2007-08 and 2008-09.

Tax holiday on oil and gas explorations

3374. SHRI JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP)-I to VII has provided tax holidays both on oil and gas without any exceptions;

(b) whether bidders had also submitted bids on explicit commitment on availability of 7 years tax holidays on commercial production of both oil and gas under NELP-I to VII;

(c) if so, the reasons for withdrawing tax holidays now;

(d) whether Government would clarify its stands on tax holidays on NELP-I and NELP-VII to avoid adverse impact on future exploration programmes; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (e) Tax holiday is provided as per the provisions of the Income-tax Act, 1961 and not as per the New Exploration Licencing Policy.

As per the provisions of sub-section (9) of section 80-IB of the Income-tax Act, 1961, as they stood prior to the amendment proposed by the Finance (No. 2) Bill 2009, a deduction was available only in respect of profits and gains derived from commercial production or refining of mineral oil. The Finance (No. 2) Bill 2009 proposes to amend the Income Tax Act, 1961 so as to extend the tax holiday under sub-section (9) of section 80-IB of the Income Tax Act, which was hitherto available in respect of profits arising from the commercial production or refining of mineral oil, also to natural gas from blocks which are licensed under the VIII Round of bidding for award of exploration contracts (hereafter referred to as 'NELP-VIII') under the New Exploration Licencing Policy announced by the Government of India *vide* Resolution No. O-19018/22/95-ONG. DO.VL, dated 10th February, 1999 and begin commercial production of natural gas on or after the 1st day of April, 2009. This benefit will also be available for profits from natural gas produced in blocks awarded under the IVth round of bidding for coal bed methane blocks.

The commitment to the bidders was that the tax holiday would be available to them as per the provisions of sub-section (4E) of section 80-IA of the Income-tax Act, as it stood prior to its substitution by Finance Act 1999, or sub-section (9) of section 80-IB of the Income-tax Act, as applicable from time to time.

The Government stands by its commitment to the bidders that the tax holiday would be available to them as per the provisions of sub-section (4E) of section 80-IA of the Income-tax